

Sinclair Broadcast Group of Maryland, owner of the largest chain of television stations in the nation, plans to preempt regular programming two weeks before the Nov. 2 election to air a documentary that accuses Sen. John F. Kerry of betraying American prisoners during the Vietnam War.

Sinclair has ordered its 62 stations, some of which are in the critical swing states of Ohio, Florida, Iowa and Wisconsin, to air "Stolen Honor: Wounds That Never Heal" during prime-time hours next week. The Sinclair station group collectively reaches 24 percent of U.S. television households.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard.

Please do not allow these stations to air "Stolen Honor," or if they do, please be sure they also air a pro-Kerry program like "Going Upriver" shortly after. Thank you.